DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 322 817 HE 023 737

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TITLE An Ethnographic Comparison of Mentoring Functions for Women in Academe and Business.
PUB DATE Apr 90
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Meeting (Boston, MA, April 23-27, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Attitudes; Employed Women; *Ethnography; Helping Relationship; Higher Education; Interpersonal Relationship; *Interprofessional Relationship; *Mentors; *Modeling (Psychology); Professional Development; *Women Administrators; *Women Faculty

ABSTRACT

A total of 14 women in high administrative or executive positions was studied to investigate the mentoring activity of primary women role models in business and academe. Two primary questions asked were: (1) In what ways have you mentored other women? (2) How can mentoring assist in the personal and professional development of women? Through the interview process, personal account data were gathered during two-hour sessions. It became clear that women in academe were more sensitive to enhancing the personal development of junior colleagues than women in business. Women in the business world focused primarily on the development of proteges' careers and to a lesser extent on the psychosocial functions of mentoring. Women in business became more like the dominant male group and abandoned feminine caretaking or nurturing qualities. There was also little evidence that women mentors in business or academe protected their proteges, took responsibility for mistakes outside the proteges' control, or acted as buffers. An appendix lists career and psychosocial functions of mentoring. Contains 44 references. (GLR)

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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC COMPARISON OF MENTORING FUNCTIONS FOR WOMEN IN ACADEME AND BUSINESS

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at the
American Educational Research Association Meeting
April 23-27, 1990
Boston

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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC COMPARISON OF MENTORING FUNCTIONS FOR WOMEN IN ACADEME AND BUSINESS

> Women are the best helpers of one another.
> Let them think; let them act; till they know
> what they need . . . .
>
> Margaret Fuller, 1845

One would believe that the popularity of mentoring developed within the last decade. Couched in a variety of terms--networking, sponsorship, role modeling--mentoring has become a well-known strategy for women climbing the career ladder. Interestingly, the concept of mentoring cannot claim origins in modern American society. The philosophy and practice of mentoring dates to second century BC with Chinese academic genealogy and the teachings of Confucius.

Historically, mentoring phenomenon focuses on the lives and experiences of the male gender. For example, Homer in the Odyssey concentrated on the task of grooming the prince for leadership with the assistance of Mentor, the King's wise old friend. Male mentoring was exemplified in the relationships of Socrates and Plato, Freud and Jung, and Haydn and Beethoven.

According to research, mentoring has played a central role in psychosocial and career growth at every transitional stage of human

development. Through his study of 40 males, Levinson (1978) determined that adults experience life cycles ears; and within the early adult years, the forming of mentor relationships is a predictable developmental task. Levinson (1978, p. 98) described the mentor relationship as significant since the mentor's critical role is "to support and facilitate the realization of the [protege's] Dream."

It is only within the last twenty years that mentoring has been examined in relation to women's life cycles and development. As Swoboda and Millar (1986) pointed out, women in business and academe inevitably have different experiences in their professions by virtue of their social status and cultural experiences. A new understanding of women's experiences has been presented by researchers such as Bardwick (1971), Carlson (1972), Gilligan (1982), Katz (1979), and Kram (1985). These researchers have helped to fill the information gap in the area of women's development and mentoring.

The developmental relationship that exists with mentoring has been defined various ways. Interaction between individuals (usually junior and senior colleagues), which promotes professional development or career development, is referred to as mentoring or mentor relationships (Cameron, 1978; Kram and Isabella, 1985; Levinson, 1978; McNeer, 1983; Speizer, 1981; Williams, 1977; Wright and Wright, 1987). Slightly different perspectives define mentoring as sponsorship (Clark and Corcoran, 1986) or role modeling (Shakeshaft, 1987).

Various authors have identified continuums or stages of mentoring which facilitate learning and provide access to the

organizational culture (Dalton, Thompson, and Price, 1977; Eberspacher and Sisler 1987; Merriam, 1983; Shapiro, Haseltine, and Rowe, 1978; Zey, 1981). At the beginning of the continuum are the networking, colleague, and peer relationships. It is at this early point in the career development of an individual that information is shared and learning occurs regarding the work experience. At the end of the continuum or at the final stage of the mentoring process is the "mentor."

Merriam (1983, p. 164) identified the mentor as ". . . involved in developing individuals." This is in contrast to a "sponsor" or "patron" where the emphasis is on individual career development through a primary organizational focus. Williams (1977, p. 207) described the mentoring relation in her book for executive women: "[A]chieving a mentoring relationship . . . is likely falling in love--you can't force it to happen, and it only works if the chemistry is right."

With more women entering and progressing in the work force, research on women and mentoring has concentrated on career advancement in business and industry (see, e.g., Henning and Jardim, 1977; Kanter, 1979; Kram, 1980; Phillips, 1977). Reich (1986) reported that in female executives' mentor-protege relationships the effective, or emotional, quality was vital. Based on this study and his previous study of male executives and their mentor counterparts, Reich noted that men's and women's approaches to mentoring differ. Indeed it was Virginia Woolf (in Gilligan, 1982, p. 16) in the early 1900's that exclaimed, "[T]he values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex."

Well documented are the lack of women role models in professional and high administrative positions, the lack of women faculty positions in various academic departments, and barriers to women's leadership in business due to male-oriented organizational expectations (Bolton, 1980; Eberspacher and Sisler, 1987; Hall and Sandler, 1983; Holt, 1981; Lipman-Blumen, 1984; Schwartz, 1989). However, most researchers reported that mentors can play an important role in the career and adult development of women in academe and business.

In view of career development and career advancement difficulties faced by women and given the personal and professional benefits of mentoring, a study investigating mentoring activity among women was conducted. The purpose of the study was to investigate the mentoring activity of primary women role models in business and academe.

RESEARCH METHODS

A total of 14 women in high administrative or executive positions was selected based on the guiding principle that each woman was the senior ranking woman in her particular organizational unit and in a position to mentor other women in the organization. In the academic setting, these women represented the positions of vice-provost, vice-president, campus director, and academic dean. The positions of chief executive officer, vice-president, and director were represented by women in business. The research was conducted in urban areas of Arizona and California.

Gilligan (1980) pointed out that "For the study of women's lives to bring new insights to the understanding of human development, it is necessary for that study to begin with descriptive or ethnographic accounts of women's experience in the adult years . . ." (p. 17). Similarly, Stanley and Wise (1983) suggested that "Ethnomethodology attempts to use the personal in ways which are in sympathy with feminism, and so feminist social science must pay careful attention to it" (p. 151). In order to conceptualize and explore the personal accounts and experiences of these women as mentors, an interview process was chosen for the study. Current literature to some extent guided the research process and helped formulate the questions posed to seven executive women in business and seven administrators in academe.

The interview was directed, but not limited, by two primary questions:

1. In what ways have you mentored other women?
2. How can mentoring assist in the personal and professional development of women?

Through the interview process, personal account data were gathered during two-hour sessions. The transcripts of the data were reviewed and analyzed utilizing the systems framework developed by Kram (1986). This framework defines mentoring in terms of five career functions (sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure, and challenging work) and four psychosocial functions (role modeling, counseling, acceptance and confirmation, and friendship). These functions are aspects of relationships between junior and senior

colleagues, which can describe the female mentoring activity in academe and business (see Chart 1 in Appendix A).

Each transcript was analyzed by computer software, utilizing a coded search of the text based on the mentoring descriptions developed by Kram, as well as individually reviewed for career and psychosocial functions of mentoring. Furthermore, examples of activity as a mentor as well as other similar personal accounts were utilized to compare women executives and administrators in business and academe.

RESULTS

Mentoring was defined for the study as the interaction between junior and senior colleagues which promoted the career and psychosocial development of the protege. Both women in academe and business spoke frequently of women and mentoring and both groups exhibited mentoring activity. However, analysis of the text revealed a 33 percent greater number of coded responses from transcripts of women in academe. Moreover, women in academe generally exhibited more nurturing qualities and promoted the psychosocial aspects of mentoring more frequently than women in business.

Both women in academe and business gave many examples of mentoring activity in terms of sponsorship and coaching which illustrated that mentors have opened doors for their junior colleagues and have shared relevant information regarding proteges' performance. For instance, a dean discussed her view on helping women: "It's a matter of getting women to make good choices, check

things out, open doors -- that's the long process." An academic vice president suggested that "I have made a number of opportunities available to women." An educational administrator interested with faculty articulation outside the institution sponsored faculty and opened doors in her own manner: "Last year my own goal was to connect a minimum of 50 percent of faculty with one professor outside of the Center. I have assisted 75 percent of faculty with this goal."

Teaching the ropes and giving feedback help to improve the performance of the protege. Coaching was described by one woman top executive: "They have to learn our philosophies and goals in a service-oriented business. We have a review once a month. We are constantly getting back to them on how they are fitting in with the organization and if they are growing." Another woman who owned and operated a computer company described her coaching activity: "I like to give them [women] road-maps. I don't commit the company to a career path but help them and watch and see if they commit. You have to be responsible for your employees . . . salary road-map, skill road-map, and the type of position. It's a lot of bother, but it's a job or a career." Another woman who had experience counseling women but now administers a satellite campus pointed out: "I am probably much more direct, take more risks in critiquing or in giving information that's hard for people to hear and hard for me to give. You give others a gift by being honest with them."

Further interview data revealed that both women in academe and business were promoting role modeling activities. This consisted

of projecting behaviors and skills to the protege that demonstrated a professional identity. A vice-president of instruction, new to her position, intimated: "After I came, a female instructor said to me '. . . thank god for you because we didn't have anybody before you came, to show us how we ought to dress, act, talk with other people, and interact'." Similarly, another academic vice-president shared: "I had a male student tell me that he viewed me as a role model. I think that as women we have a good opportunity to be role models for men. I think with men that I mentor more by example." In terms of working with women in the business world, a woman president said: "You have to lay down the law in business, acting as a role model."

The data supported that there was some evidence of women in academe and business creating opportunities to enhance visibility and stimulate growth for the protege. Kram's observations classified these functions as career areas of exposure and challenging work. One businesswoman remarked: "As long as you bring along your staff as a team and include them in the performance rewards, it makes the job very satisfying." A dean referencing a colleague suggested: "I helped by putting things in her pathway. I gave her a list of national committees and when she applied, I wrote a letter of support. I passed on consulting calls to her." An academic vice-president asserted: "I mentored her through research presentations--so now she presents at statewide and regional levels on her own."

Only women in academe evidenced psychosocial aspects of mentoring functions in terms of counseling, acceptance and confirmation, and friendship. Women in education discussed a variety of mentoring experiences related to counseling where they

had provided a forum for exploring proteges' personal and professional dilemmas including listening to problems of other women, helping with personal difficulties, and providing professional advice. Other examples of psychosocial aspects of mentoring included long-term friendships and enhancement of self-esteem through ongoing support.

The interview data evidenced many examples of women in academe exhibiting psychosocial mentoring roles. A vice-president spoke of a friendship: "I mentored her in her own self-esteem and her ability to do something on her own. By taking the credits she had accumulated and putting them together for a program . . . When she received her degree, her entire family was there. What it did for her self-esteem was just incredible." Another example by an administrator was the following: "I did work with Title IX and aspiring women and had a lot of opportunities. There were a few that I had a long ongoing relationship. These were friendships, caring what happens, being there for them, just keeping in touch even though there's no need or agenda. Letting them know when opportunities come along. They do the same for me. Mentoring is a commitment."

There was little evidence that women mentors in business or academe protect their proteges, take responsibility for mistakes outside the proteges' control, or act as buffers.

Overall, women in academe spoke more frequently in the mentoring voice and gave more personal and professional examples of activities as a mentor. While women in business gave examples of

mentoring activities, career functions and organizational benefits were prominent in the interview data.

DISCUSSION

Through the interview process, it became clear that women in academe were more sensitive to enhancing the personal development of junior colleagues than women in business. One possible reason for this is the connected-teaching model discussed by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986, p. 194) in their study of women's lives. As discovered through the interviews, women in academe demonstrated that they were able to assess the needs and capabilities of the protege (learner), and "teaching" and "lessons" were devised based on the assessment. It is not surprising that women in education would tend to measure and then mentor individuals in terms of psychosocial development since education deals with personal as well as academic enrichment.

Women in the business world focused primarily on the development or proteges' careers and to a lesser extent psychosocial functions of mentoring. Although role modeling, that is, the demonstration of valued behaviors and attitudes, was evident in the personal account data, an organizational perspective was foremost. Comments such as "Company profit is the primary goal" and "Everyone must work for the good of the company" were common among the women in business. As Douvan (1976, p. 11) noted, women in a male-dominated field often lose their identity, "deemphasizing femininity." Women become more like the dominant male group and abandon feminine caretaking or nurturing qualities.

In regard to career and adult development, the benefits of mentoring activity to the protege have been studied. For example, Sheehy (1974) noted the positive impact of mentoring on women's careers, and Bolton (1980) suggested that aspects of social learning are gained through mentoring relationships. These aspects are otherwise absent from female development since girls do not engage regularly in team sports to the same extent that young men do.

Same-sex role models were reported as more important for women, and such initial pairings helped avoid issues of any inappropriate relationships (Shakeshaft, 1987; Project on the Status and Education of Women, 1983). With Miller (in Gilligan, 1982, pp. 148, 169) suggesting that "the parameters of the female's development are not the same as the male's and the same terms do not apply, the advantages of women mentoring women, that is, women interacting and sharing experiences and knowledge, are significant." As Wright and Wright (1987, p. 205) pointed out, "[F]emale proteges may not be able to use male mentors as role models in the area of balancing family and work."

Many organizations have incorporated career management plans which prepare, implement, and monitor career strategies for individual employees in concert with organizational goals and objectives (see e.g., Story, 1976). The assignment of a mentor is sometimes included within a career management plan, but because a higher proportion of executives are male, it is likely that the mentor will be a man.

PRACTICE AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Though women in the last decade have made progress in the work force, the number of women in high administrative or professional positions remains low. Moreover, serious pay inequities continue to exist. The Department of Labor (Recent Narrowing, 1988) reported that women's median earnings were 70 percent of men's in 1987. The American Association of University Professors in its annual report of faculty salaries noted that women faculty at colleges and universities in 1988-89 earned between 7.5 and 13.2 percent less than male faculty (Women Faculty Paid Less, 1989). In regard to rank and tenure status, the statistics for women in academe are discouraging as well (see, e.g., California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1985).

The benefits of mentor relationships in academe and business are numerous--the mentor, protege, and organization can profit. Reich (1986) asserted that mentors gained satisfaction from assisting junior colleagues and improved their managerial skills. Additionally, increased stimulation by the ideas of bright and creative proteges was expressed by mentors.

In summarizing the positive outcomes of mentoring, Halcomb (1980, p. 18) commented:

> "Senior women don't realize . . . that mentoring enhances their own careers. Men who are renowned in heir fields have disciples who quote them, write about them, invite them to speak. It's no just out of benevolence that they help . . . it's because it's in their own interest."

Benefits to the advancement of a protege's career include understanding the organizational culture (Kram, 1986), access to informal networks of communication that carry significant professional information (Clark and Corcoran, 1986), and assistance in defining career aspirations and receiving support to reach goals (Bogat and Redner, 1985; Cameron, 1978).

Mentoring relationships are not only advantageous to mentors and proteges but to organizations as well. Mentoring plays a vital role in future organizational leadership in higher education. The development of administrative potential is strengthened with the nurturing of capable junior colleagues with appropriate skills and abilities. Women who hold high-level positions in academe and business have the opportunity and challenge to assist in the career and psychosocial development of junior colleagues. Roche (1979) pointed out that women who have experienced mentoring activity feel they can succeed and thus choose careers instead of jobs, thereby committing to an organization for a longer period of time. Additionally Reich (1986) found improved performance within a work group with the existence of mentor relationships.

Based on the aforementioned value of mentoring, academe and business need to consider strategies and programs which foster mentoring activity in the work place. First steps could include defining a population who could benefit from mentoring functions, establishing criteria for creating alliances among women, and collecting data on mentors' and proteges' goals, interests, and needs.

Women will continue to enter the labor force in dramatic numbers. With women mentoring women, the talents of both the

mentor and the protege are utilized, and mentoring becomes a stimulus in the work environment--to promote women workers in higher education and enhance the organization.

APPENDIX A

CHART 1

MENTORING FUNCTIONS

Career Functions	*Psychosocial Functions*
Sponsorship Opening doors. Having connections that will support the junior's career advancement.	***Role modeling*** Demonstrating valued behavior, attitudes and/or skills that aid the junior in achieving competence, confidence, and a clear professional identity.
Coaching Teaching "the ropes." Giving relevant positive and negative feedback to improve the junior's performance and potential.	***Counseling*** Providing a helpful and confidential forum for exploring personal and professional dilemmas. Excellent listening, trust, and rapport that enable both individuals to address central developmental concerns.
Protection Providing support in different situations. Taking responsibility for mistakes that were outside the junior's control. Acting as a buffer when necessary.	***Acceptance and confirmation*** Providing ongoing support, respect, and admiration, which strengthens self-confidence and self-image. Regularly reinforcing both are highly valued people and contributors to the organization.
Exposure Creating opportunities for the junior to demonstrate competence where it counts. Taking the junior to important meetings that will enhance his or her visibility.	***Friendship*** Mutual caring and intimacy that extends beyond the requirements of daily work tasks. Sharing of experience outside the immediate work setting.
Challenging work Delegating assignments that stretch the junior's knowledge and skills in order to stimulate growth and preparation to move ahead.	

Source: Kram, K. E. (1986). Mentoring in the workplace. In R. A. Katzell (ed.), Career development in organizations (pp. 160-201). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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